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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
July 14, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CARLOS CURBELO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE AND GEORGIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen of the House, we ought not bet against Ukraine and Georgia.

I recently returned from a bipartisan delegation of the House Democracy Partnership that visited Ukraine and Georgia over the Fourth of July recess. Our purpose was to reflect this body to those parliamentary bodies in Ukraine and Georgia.

I—and I know the other members of the House Democracy Partnership—came away with a feeling of encouragement and a feeling of gratitude for the tenacity and very seriousness with which the Ukrainians and the Georgians are pursuing freedom.

These are two nations that desperately want to be in the orbit of the West. They desperately want to be a part of the EU; they desperately want to be a part of NATO, and they are doing everything they can to stiff-arm and push back from the aggression of Vladimir Putin. They need our help; they need our encouragement, and they need our support.

It is said that there are some who look at this as the front line of the rising voices against authoritarianism, and I think that is true. We have got to do everything we can in this body not only to provide the economic support and other support that these countries need, but also to do everything we can to push the administration to do the right thing as well.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is a big day on Capitol Hill. The Iranian agreement has been signed. Hopefully, we will all have a chance to study it and think through the implications of this historic event, but the legislative clock is ticking down on another area. We have only 10 legislative days left this month before we face another transportation funding cliff.

The expectation now is that there will be a 34th short-term transportation extension that we have faced since our last, meaningful 6-year reauthorization. People are scrambling for another short-term funding source to keep us going for the next few months that targets, presumably, $8 billion to $11 billion to get us through the end of the year.

This is actually worse than no solution at all because it perpetuates the uncertainty, the crisis mentality, the inability of State and local governments that rely on this Federal partnership to supply approximately one-half of the capital expenditures for our surface transportation.

This uncertainty comes at a time when our bridges, roads, and transit systems are all in serious areas of disrepair. We are desperately in need of bigger, longer-term projects.

It is a myth that somehow we can't afford to take action. The public is paying now hundreds of dollars a year in damage to each of their vehicles, costs far in excess of a few cents a day for a gas tax increase.

American commuters and businesses are suffering over $120 billion a year in costs related to congestion, costs directly related to inadequate infrastructure. People are tying themselves in knots when there is a simple, obvious solution.

As pointed out in a delightful op-ed in The Washington Post on July 9, we should simply follow Ronald Reagan's example and fill up America's highway trust fund.

They ask how the famously tax-cutting conservative President raised the Federal user fee—the gas tax—on motor fuels 125 percent. While he was concerned about general taxation, he was absolutely comfortable with having user fees cover specific costs like the fuel tax for aviation or inland waterway fees.

He worked with Republicans in Congress, who demonstrated significant support for user fee increases. He then gave his Secretary of Transportation, Drew Lewis, free hand to lay the groundwork.

Finally, when he decided to support a gas tax increase, his Department of Transportation swung into action, as did Ronald Reagan himself. He gave an eloquent speech November 29, 1982, on

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